Counties study proposal to put town into Summit

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HEBER CITY — Representatives of Wasatch and Summit County have begun to examine the boundary change proposed by Bench Creek residents in Wasatch County who have filed a petition to have their community annexed to Summit County, Wasatch County Attorney Steve Hansen reported.

Bench Creek is about 12 miles northeast of Heber City, near Kamas.

Hansen said the issue will be on the November ballot and voters in both counties must approve the annexation for it to go into effect. "It is an issue that requires information and debate by the public," he said.

Bench Creek representatives said one of the main reasons they are requesting the annexation is that it's more practical for their children to attend Summit County schools than coming clear into Heber City. However the parents complain that because they live in Wasatch County they have no say in school policies and can't even vote for the school board. Also, Wasatch County has difficulty providing services, i.e. law enforcement and snow removal, and has contracted with Summit to provide fire protection for the area because of the distance between Bench Creek and the main population of the county.

Hansen said Wasatch County voters will need to consider "the tax base, what we're going to lose in revenue, and what it costs to provide the services now.

"One thing that concerns me, as the county attorney, is that wherever the line is drawn, we don't leave ourselves a large section of private ground near the boundary which can be developed in the future. Once we've opened the door for a new Bench Creek road, to go up into a new section of private ground, we'd be in the same situation in ten years that we're in now, trying to provide services to a remote area."

He pointed out that to allow the first annexation could establish that as the solution for the problems and "we'd could end up chopping away at Wasatch County."